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RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY 4676
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 0159
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000996

AIDAC
SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE ALSO FOR S/ES-O/CMS, EAP/TC AND CA/OCS, BANGKOK FOR
USAID/OFDA REGIONAL ADVISOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [AEMR](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [SENV](#) [XE](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MORAKOT SITREP 5: DEATH TOLL CLIMBS AGAIN AS U.S.
MATERIAL AID ARRIVES

REF: A. TAIPEI 992 (SITREP NO. 4)

[1](#)B. TAIPEI 979

[1](#)C. TAIPEI 974 (SITREP NO. 3)

[1](#)D. TAIPEI 966 (SITREP NO. 2)

[1](#)E. TAIPEI 958 (SITREP NO. 1)

[1](#)F. TAIPEI 967

[1](#)G. STATE 83578

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The estimated losses from Morakot continue to mount, suggesting this could be the most deadly weather-related disaster to hit Taiwan in fifty years. Relief and rebuilding efforts are gaining momentum. The arrival here of supplies provided by DoD received wide media coverage. USAID continues to monitor the situation on the ground in the worst-hit areas. The Taiwan Red Cross has received significant donations from private sources, and is working to coordinate its relief efforts with more than 30 local non-governmental organizations. End Summary.

Human and Economic Toll

[1](#)2. (SBU) The official death toll from Typhoon Morakot stands at 126 as of the afternoon of August 17. 61 individuals are reported missing and 45 injured. Although media are reporting that an additional 491 individuals are confirmed dead in Xiaolin Village, which was destroyed by a mudslide, our contacts note that these deaths are still pending legal confirmation at the county level. That said, confirmation is expected. It will raise the final death toll from Morakot to well over 600, making this the most deadly weather-related disaster to hit Taiwan since 1959.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Agricultural losses are now estimated at over USD365 million, with USD82 million of that amount attributable to direct loss of agricultural land and equipment, with the balance coming from loss of agricultural products, particularly in aquaculture, poultry, and meat. Infrastructure costs continue to mount, as well, with road reconstruction making up the lion's share of the bill. All national expressways are now repaired, with 93 provincial and county roads still in need of restoration. The Directorate

General of Highways estimates it will take two months to repair those roads. The Taiwan Railway Administration reports that it will take six months to rebuild the bridge over the Taimali River and restore to 100 percent southern railway transportation. Authorities continue to shy away from making estimates of total infrastructure repair costs as they plan to open much of this work to tender. However, Premier Liu Chao-shiuan has stated that reconstruction budget requirements could reach USD3.3 billion, of which USD2.2 billion would be used for major infrastructure projects and relief assistance. The Ministry of Education (MOE) reports that over 1,300 schools have been damaged and 31 schools were completely destroyed. MOE is arranging for alternative instruction for the roughly 1,600 students with nowhere to attend classes as the new school year approaches.

14. (SBU) There have been significant improvements in water supply, with 31,885 households still suffering from lack of access to potable water (down from nearly 1 million households at the end of last week). An estimated 14,782 households are still without power, and an additional 3,848 are waiting for resumption of telecommunications services. A total of 24,462 individuals were forced to evacuate their homes as a result of Morakot and over 5,000 are still staying in 53 shelters (many of the other evacuees were able to reside temporarily with family).

Relief Measures

15. (SBU) The Department of Defense, in support of the

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Department of State, authorized U.S. Pacific Command to provide assistance to Taiwan in response to the typhoon. This response has taken the form of plastic sheeting, water purification tablets, and medium- and heavy-lift capable helicopters. The plastic sheeting was delivered to Taiwan on August 16, and on August 17, a USMC C-130 landed at Tainan Airfield at 1225 and departed at 1302 after dropping off a pallet of 315,000 water purification tablets. A US Navy MD-53D from the USS Denver arrived at Tainan Airfield at 1425 to conduct a pre-operation survey. However, the planned aerial survey was canceled due to weather. Flight operations in support of Taiwan relief efforts are tentatively re-scheduled to commence tomorrow morning.

16. (SBU) USAID/OFDA Acting Regional Advisor Ron Libby arrived in Taiwan on the evening of August 14. He met with AIT Acting Director Wang, viewed Taiwan's Central Disaster Operations Center, met with the Minister of Transportation and Communications, and with Secretary-General Chen of the Taiwan chapter of the Red Cross. On August 16, Libby traveled to the south of Taiwan, where AIT/K staff accompanied him to meet with relief officials and view affected areas. On August 17, Libby was able to have an aerial view (aboard a Taiwan helicopter) of affected areas and seven tentative drop-off points for relief efforts. According to AIT/K, the devastation viewed today exceeded what Libby expected. It appears that use of USG resources to reach some remote areas affected by floods and mudslides is unlikely in the next 10 days. The U.S. helicopters will be useful to ferry equipment into disaster areas to begin making access routes from both sides. A longer-term solution may require expertise on stabilizing mountainsides. Overall, Libby felt that Taiwan rescue and relief workers were doing a good job. AIT expects the arrival of Mr. Alan Dwyer, Principal Regional Advisor for East Asia-Pacific, USAID/OFDA on August 19, to replace the departing Mr. Libby and continue providing assistance on relief operations.

17. (SBU) The Council of Labor Affairs (CLA) is offering a total of 112,000 temporary jobs in 45 affected towns and villages for a two-week period to assist in clean-up and reconstruction. The wage offered is roughly USD3.10 per

hour. The authorities continue to offer low interest loans and cash payments to farmers and residents of affected areas to assist in reconstruction and repair. The Executive Yuan (EY) is considering a proposal to offer allowances of roughly USD90 per month to typhoon victims, with a maximum of three eligible persons per household. These allowances would last for one year. Premier Liu has announced that the EY will cooperate with NGOs to jointly build houses for typhoon victims.

18. (SBU) Private donations have continued to pour into local organizations, and particularly the Red Cross. NGOs around the island have told us that financial assistance at this time is more useful than material goods. The Red Cross on August 19 will convene approximately 30 local NGOs to discuss further coordination of relief efforts, particularly the provision of services such as trauma counseling. The American Club in Taipei has made a call for donations and held a silent auction to raise funds. The American Chamber of Commerce in Taipei has also made a public appeal to its membership for donations, and set up a text-messaging system to make donations.

WANG